Digital Communication Tools

A great opportunity for students

There's no doubt that computers and keyboarding skills are an integral part of a student's education. Along with basic computer skills there is definitely a need for these students to have the experience of using different types of computer input and output devices. I have taught Computer Keyboarding at the high school level for the past 4 years with a lot of reluctant learners. Students today need a lot more challenge than just basic keyboarding applications due to the experience they have already had at younger ages with computer technology.

Digital Communication Tools offers the opportunity for students to have the experience with these devices and the challenges needed to motivate them to be successful! I would like to share with you my experiences over the past 2 semesters teaching Digital Communication Tools instead of Computer Keyboarding at the high school level, primarily 9th grade.

Equipment

Below is a list of the equipment that I use in my lab to teach the DCT class. Of course, like most schools we were not able to purchase complete classroom sets of all of the equipment but have found these numbers do work well.

31 computers with Microsoft Office 2003, including Microsoft OneNote 2003
4 Bundle Packs of Dragon Naturally Speaking 8
6 Wacom Graphire 4's
6 Palm One Tungsten E2's
1 Canon CanoScan 8400
1 Tablet PC

We recently equipped a second lab at our school with the same equipment listed above. This will allow us to teach 2 sections of DCT simultaneously beginning Fall 2006.

<u>Class Set-up</u>

At the beginning of the semester I demonstrated all of the technology devices that the students were going to have the opportunity to use. This really motivated the students in the beginning because they seemed to be anxious to have the opportunity to try all of the devices. Of course, you will have some that have already used certain ones.

All students work at their own pace through a series of assignments or jobs. They begin with basic keyboarding and then move on to document formatting, speech recognition, handwriting recognition, PDA's and presentations. Once all students in the class have finished document formatting we begin a rotation schedule through speech, handwriting, PDA's and presentation. This requires a lot of classroom organization and individualized instruction; however, I have had a huge success rate with this format with all levels of students. I also utilize peer coaching which helps the students reinforce the skills that they have learned.

Students use Microsoft OneNote on a daily basis. They input all of their classroom notes in OneNote such as terminology and formatting instructions. They also input daily word assignments and math activities.

<u>Timeline</u>

My school is on a traditional schedule with 6-week grading periods. Students spend the following amount of time on each section of the class: (times are approximate depending on the individual's strengths and weaknesses) When a student completes one phase he or she moves on to the next which allows the student to work at his or her own pace.

Keyboarding	5 – 6 weeks
Documents	3 – 4 weeks
Speech	5 – 6 days
Handwriting	3 – 4 days
PDA's	2 – 3 days
Presentation	3 – 4 weeks (I incorporate scanning, digital cameras, and web-cams into their presentation)

Assessment

Students receive daily grades for proper keyboarding techniques during the first 6 weeks of the semester. During the document activities, students complete projects and quizzes that are graded based on formatting, grammar and accuracy. To assess the speech, handwriting, PDA and presentation sections I use rubrics that show that they have met all of the requirements. I also give them quizzes on terminology. I allow them to use their notebooks in OneNote on all of the quizzes.

I have enjoyed teaching DCT over the past 2 semesters and will be teaching it again this Fall. I feel my students I have had a much higher success rate than in the past based on assignment completion and motivation resulting in better grades. I have also surveyed the students in the classes and have received very positive feedback.

Over the past couple of months I have had teachers from other schools visit my classroom to observe and talk about what I am doing. I welcome visits from anyone who would like to see firsthand my classroom in operation. If interested, contact me at the information listed below. I would be glad to help in any way possible.

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